Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Highlights of Our Year: 2000 - 2001

Our Mandate

To advise the Minister. To bring forward the concerns of women.

Our Mission

To advance equality, fairness, and dignity for all women.

Our Vision

A province where all women enjoy full equality.

- Where women of diverse cultures, races, religions, and sexual orientations participate in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities...where women sit in equal numbers in legislatures.

- Where legislation, policies, and programs of governments reflect that equality.

- Where women's earning power equals that of men...where women are welcomed in all professions and trades...where household work and child care is valued by all and shared equally by women and men.

- Where no woman fears violence in her home, workplace, or community.

- Where women's health and well-being is a priority for women, health services, and government.

Goals and Accomplishments

Inclusion

The Council works to increase the participation of women in all their diversity in decisions that affect their lives, families, and communities, with particular emphasis on those who face discrimination because of race, age, language, class, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or various forms of family status.

- The Chair of the Advisory Council was accepted for participation in the Governor-General's Study Tour of Canada, focusing her work on Canada's far northern communities.

- Promoted Professor Louise Carbert's research to identify barriers and opportunities for greater political participation by rural women, with a view to building on this work to develop and implement a women's leadership development program for implementation across the province.

- Advisory Council Chair sat on Mi'kmaq Education Council and the Race Relations Committee of the Nova Scotia Barristers Society.

- Participated in joint planning for women's centre funding.

- Built on previous work with young women by participating in conference *Raising Voices, Channeling Energies II*, held in

Yarmouth in May 2000.

- Responded to approximately 1,300 requests for information and referral, primarily via telephone. Received approximately 30,000 visits to our website between June 1, 2000 and February 28, 2001, with particularly heavy utilization of materials on woman abuse and family violence.

Economic Equality

- Responded to government's discussion paper, *Towards Prosperity*, with positive feedback on the quality of the input and the brief submitted by Council.

- Provided background data and advice to support the extension of maternity/parental/ adoption leave to all Nova Scotian parents, allowing Nova Scotians to benefit from changes to the federal legislation in this area.

- Initiated a Roundtable on policy issues related to income security and training, involving representatives from relevant federal and provincial government departments and community groups.

- Council continues to liaise with the Women's Community Economic Development Network, takes part in the Interdepartmental Committee on Community Economic Development, and supports the inclusion of women in the Sustainable Communities Initiative through participation in the Steering Committee and two field teams.

- In Amherst, Council co-sponsored a conference on the Maritime Provinces plastics industry, highlighting the opportunities for women in this field.

- Council published the proceedings of its policy forum, *"A Woman's Work is Never Done"~ Can Policy Value Caregiving?*

- Liaison and support to the Association of Nova Scotia Women for Education and Research in Science (ANSWERS), Women in Trades and Technology - Nova Scotia (WITT-NS), Women in Information Technology (Win-IT), Techsploration, and Hypatia projects all keep Council abreast of programs to increase women's participation in science and technology careers and allows us to facilitate contact and cooperation among the groups.

- Published *Money Matters*, the first in a series of statistical reports on women in Nova Scotia.

Eliminating Violence Against Women

- Council recommendation for inquiries into the murder of Lorrie Maxwell and the suicide of Bruce George resulted in reviews by the Department of Justice; by the Department of Community Services; and one being carried out by Dean Dawn Russell of the Dalhousie Law School to make recommendations for the further development of the justice Framework for Action Against Family Violence.

- Provided written input into proposed reform of the Police Act, with resulting positive media coverage.

- Ongoing staff involvement with Department of Justice committee to develop screening protocols and procedures to prevent inappropriate use of mediation in situations of woman abuse, either past or present.

- Ongoing consultation in the area of restorative justice, to ensure that the processes are not misused and that they do not re-victimize women.

- Continued discussion on the use of conditional sentencing in cases of sexual assault and other crimes of violence

- Co-sponsorship of two workshops on parent abuse, the first directed to helping professionals; the second, to parents.

- Took part in Community Advocates for Rights with Responsibilities committee to counter racist and sexist advertising and publications among youth.

- Assist community groups with the annual Purple Ribbon Campaign.

- Coordinate government's commemoration of the National Day of Remembrance and Action On Violence Against Women

Improved Health and Well-Being

- Advocated for the removal of direct-to-consumer-advertising of prescription drugs, and for the elimination of lawn pesticides as an environmental and health protection issue.

- Development work for province-wide campaign to inform young women about the risks of "date rape" drugs such as rohypnol.

- Support of the work of the Black Women's Health Network through assistance in conference planning and implementation.

- Continued support of well women's clinics through community liaison and rural outreach program.

- Preparation for the Healthy Balance Research Program, to explore the relationship between women's paid and unpaid work, empowerment, and health status. This successful $1.7 million five-year research proposal was developed in partnership with the Maritime Centre of Excellence on Women's Health, Dalhousie University, and the IWK Grace Health Centre, along with researchers in eight universities, both local and national.

- Council Chair continues participation on research into the health needs of Aboriginal women.

Publications

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